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Burundi

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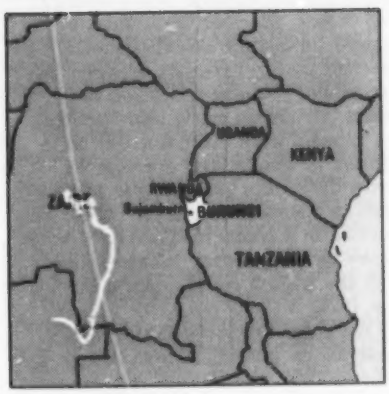


Official Name:
Republic of Burundi

PROFILE

People

Nationality: *Noun and adjective*—Burundi (sing. and pl.). **Population** (1985): 4.7 million. **Annual growth rate:** 2.96%. **Ethnic groups:** Hutu 85%, Tutsi 14%, Twa 1%. **Religions:** Roman Catholic 62%, traditional African 32%, Protestant 5%, Muslim 1%. **Languages:** Kirundi and French (both official), Swahili. **Education:** *Years compulsory*—none. *Attendance*—45%. *Literacy*—30%. **Health:** *Infant mortality rate*—122/1,000. *Life expectancy*—45 yrs. **Work force** (1.9 million): *Agriculture*—93%. *Industry and commerce*—1.5%. *Services*—1.5%. *Government*—4%.

Geography

Area: 27,834 sq. km. (10,747 sq. mi.); about the size of Maryland. **Cities:** *Capital*—Bujumbura (pop. 240,000). *Other cities*—Gitega (18,360), Rumonge (9,000), Ngozi (3,560). **Terrain:** Hilly, rising from 780 m. (2,600 ft.) at the shore of Lake Tanganyika to mountains more than 2,700 m. (9,000 ft.) above sea level. **Climate:** Warm but not uncomfortable in Bujumbura; cooler in high regions.

Government

Type: Republic. **Independence:** July 1, 1962. **Constitution:** November 20, 1981.

Branches: *Executive*—president (chief of state, head of government) and 19-member Cabinet. *Legislative*—65-member National Assembly. *Judicial*—Supreme Court and subsidiary courts.

Administrative subdivisions: 15 provinces and 114 communes.

Political parties: National Party of Unity and Progress (UPRONA). **Suffrage:** Universal adult.

Central government budget (1984): *Revenues*—$135.8 million. *Expenditures*—$160.6 million.

Defense (1984): 18.6% of government budget.

Flag: White diagonal cross with two red and two green panels; white circle in center with three red stars.

Economy

GDP (1984): $812 million. **Avg. annual growth rate:** 2.3%. **Per capita income:** $273. **Avg. inflation rate** (1984): 14.7%.

Natural resources: Nickel, uranium, rare earth oxide, peat, cobalt, copper, and platinum deposits not yet exploited.

Agriculture (60% of GNP): *Products*—coffee, tea, cotton, food crops. *Arable land*—89%, of which 46% is cultivated.

Industry (16% of GNP): *Types*—light consumer goods, public works construction, beverages.

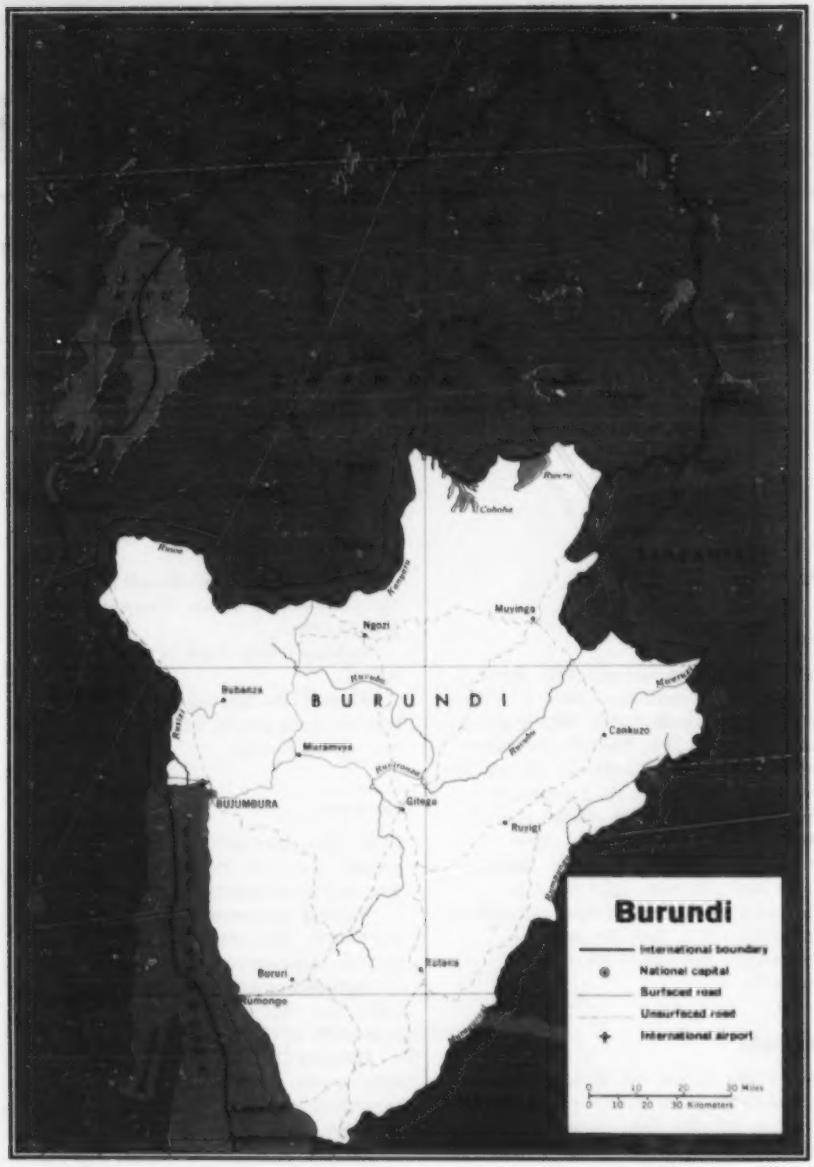
Trade (1984): *Exports*—$99 million: coffee, tea, cotton, cigarettes, soft drinks, beer. *Major markets*—US, EC. *Imports*—$183 million: cement, asphalt, petroleum, fertilizer, pesticides, textiles. *Major suppliers*—Iran, France, Belgium, FRG, Japan.

Official exchange rate: 120 Burundian francs = US$1.

Fiscal year: Calendar year.

Membership in International Organizations

UN, Organization of African Unity (OAU), International Coffee Organization, Great Lakes States Economic Community (CEPGL), Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Kagera River Basin Organization (KBO), Non-Aligned Movement, Group of 77, African, Caribbean, and Pacific Group of States, Preferential Trade Agreement for Eastern and Southern African States (PTA).



GEOGRAPHY

Burundi is a high, rolling country straddling the Nile-Congo crest. Elevations range from 670 to 2,700 meters (2,200–8,900 ft.). On its western border is the Ruzizi River Plain and Lake Tanganyika, part of the western portion of the Great Rift Valley.

Temperatures on the Ruzizi Plain, where the capital is located, average 23°C (73°F), and in the upland interior, frosts sometimes occur at night. A short dry season in January is followed by the major rainy season, February–May. The major dry season usually lasts from May to September.

PEOPLE

Burundi's population density is one of the highest in sub-Saharan Africa, with nearly all living on family farms throughout the highlands. The only urban concentrations are Bujumbura and Gitega. The population comprises three ethnic groups: Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa. The Hutu, who make up 85% of the population, are primarily farmers whose Bantu-speaking ancestors migrated into Burundi 800–1,000 years ago. The Tutsi, 14% of the population, are a pastoral people who apparently migrated from Ethiopia several hundred years after the arrival of the Hutus. Intermarriage between Hutus and Tutsis, however, has somewhat blurred tribal distinctions and, perhaps, 15% of the population are of mixed Hutu-Tutsi origin. The pygmy Twa (average height for men is 155 cm.—5 ft. 1 in.) are probably the last survivors of the aboriginal population who were driven into marginal areas by invaders.

HISTORY

Before the Europeans arrived, Burundi was a kingdom with a highly stratified, feudal social structure. The rulers were drawn from princely dynastic families (*ganwa*), from whom a king (*mwami*) was chosen. Much of the country's precolonial history was characterized by constant power struggles between the *ganwa* and the *mwami*. When the Tutsis introduced cattle into Burundi, the animals were maintained as an indication of wealth, and over the centuries the Hutus gave up title to their lands to Tutsis in return for cattle. This resulted in a feudal landholding system known as *Ubugererwa*, which lasted until the Bagaza government abolished it in 1977.

Although European explorers and missionaries visited the area briefly, as early as 1858, Burundi did not come under European administration until the 1890s, when it became part of German West Africa. Belgian troops occupied the country in 1916, and in 1923 the League of Nations mandated it to Belgium as part of the Territory of Ruanda-Urundi, now Rwanda and Burundi. Following World War II, Ruanda-Urundi became a UN Trust Territory with Belgium as the administering authority. Burundi became independent on July 1, 1962.

Following independence, the *mwami* was established as a constitutional monarch. The country fell into political disorder and economic stagnation, however, and in November 1966, with army backing, Capt. Michel Micombero took charge and proclaimed a republic. Eventually, the Micombero government lost control of the country, and on November 1, 1976, Lt. Col. Jean-Baptiste Bagaza came to power in a bloodless coup.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Ultimate political power is vested in the Central Committee of the single political party, the National Union for Progress and Unity (UPRONA). The Central Committee consists of the president of the party and 68 other members. Most were selected during the UPRONA Party's second national congress in July 1984. The congress elected Bagaza president of the party, and he was confirmed by the population in August 1984. A cabinet of 19 ministers is appointed by and responsible to the president. Civilian participation in the government has increased considerably since 1979.

The UPRONA Party and its affiliated movements—the Union of Workers of Burundi, the Union of Burundi Women, and the Union of Revolutionary Burundi Youth—are intended to serve as the framework for organizing the population for efforts to develop the country. UPRONA Party membership is open to all Burundi citizens who profess allegiance to its principles.

The first priority of the Bagaza government is to improve the living conditions of the rural poor. It has accomplished bureaucratic reforms and taken measures to stamp out corruption in government service. It is also marshaling the administrative resources and seeking increased foreign assistance through long-range planning to improve agricultural, educational, health, legal, and public services. The government has enacted reforms to end the traditional feudal landholding system.

The government is also dedicated to ethnic reconciliation and national unity. Since independence, Burundi has been plagued by conflict between the Hutus and the Tutsis. After violent outbreaks in 1965 and 1969, in which many Hutu officials were killed, a massacre occurred in 1972; the estimated number of victims varies from 100,000 to 150,000. In addition, about 100,000 Hutus sought shelter in other countries. Several thousand refugees have returned from Zaire and Tanzania, and a judicial mechanism has been established to return their land to them. Although Hutu participation in the military and the administration remains extremely limited, the government is seeking to correct the imbalance; many Hutus now hold seats in the National Assembly.

Further Information

These titles are provided as a general indication of material published on this country. The Department of State does not endorse unofficial publications.

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Melady, Thomas. *Burundi, The Tragic Years.* Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1974.

Weinstein, Warren. *Rural Violence and Repression in Central Africa.* Albany: State University of New York, 1972.

Historial Dictionary of Burundi. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1976.

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American University. *Area Handbook for Burundi.* 1969.

Principal Government Officials

President—Col. Jean-Baptiste Bagaza
Foreign Minister—Laurent Nzeyimana
Ambassador to the United States—Edouard Kadigiri
Ambassador to the United Nations—Melchior Bwakira

Burundi maintains an embassy in the United States at Suite 212, 2233 Wisconsin Avenue NW., Washington, D.C. 20007 (tel. 202-342-2574).

ECONOMY

More than 90% of the population of Burundi are subsistence farmers. Some monetization of the economy is occurring with the increase in coffee and tea production. Burundi is one of the world's poorest countries, and population pressure has reached the point at which a family's individual holdings provide only marginal support for them. In the most heavily populated areas, famine is a real threat if the weather is bad during the growing season. Soil exhaustion and severe erosion also hamper production. As a result, per capita food production has stagnated or declined in recent years, and only tremendous efforts will reverse this trend.

Coffee provides over 80% of Burun-

Path to Lake Rwihinda, near Kirundo.

Travel Notes

Customs and currency: Appropriate visas should be obtained from the Burundi Embassy before arrival. An international health certificate showing valid immunization against yellow fever is required of travelers arriving from infected areas. Health requirements change; check latest information. There is no limit on importing foreign currencies, but rigid regulations govern the conversion of Burundi francs into hard currency. All exchange transactions may take place legally only at institutions specifically designated by the government.

Climate and clothing: Lightweight, washable clothing is appropriate for Bujumbura. A lightweight raincoat and sweater are needed in the mountainous interior.

Health: Principal health hazards for travelers are malaria, colds, influenza, intestinal upsets, and infections, even of small cuts. Begin taking a malaria suppressant 1 week before arrival. Doctors and limited hospital facilities are available in Bujumbura. Medicines are often in short supply.

Telecommunications: Radiotelephone contacts are available to East Africa, although the quality is often uneven. International telephone service, via Brussels, is generally unsatisfactory due to the delay in booking calls and the frequency of static and interference. Commercial telegraph and telex facilities are available but not always reliable. Burundi is seven time zones ahead of eastern standard time.

Transportation: Regular, direct flights to and from Europe are scheduled several times a week. Flights connecting Bujumbura with Nairobi, Dar es Salaam, and Kinshasa are also available. Bujumbura recently has started bus service between some residential districts and the city center, but its utility to tourists is minimal. Elsewhere, only irregular public transportation is provided by small, privately owned buses and pickup trucks. Taxis operate from several locations within Bujumbura. Fares should be negotiated in advance. Many can be rented by the hour or the day as well. Burundi's National Tourist Office also rents minibuses and cars, although rates are high. Gasoline is generally available in Bujumbura, but pumps are scarce in the interior.

Tourist accommodations: Bujumbura has two international-class hotels, the Source du Nil and the Novotel. More modest accommodations are offered at the Paguidas Hotel (P.O. Box 2) and the Burundi Palace Hotel (Avenue de l'UPRONA). A new hotel complex, similar to a Club Mediterranee, has opened on the shore of Lake Tanganyika near Bujumbura. Due to the limited accommodations available, it is advisable to make reservations well in advance. The interior of the country has almost no hotels or guesthouses, although lodging can be obtained at some religious missions.

National holidays: Businesses and the US Embassy may be closed on the following Burundi holidays:

New Year's Day	January 1
Labor Day	May 1
Ascension Day	Date varies annually
Independence Day	July 1
Assumption Day	August 15
UPRONA Victory Day	September 18
All Saints Day	November 1
Christmas Day	December 25

di's export earnings, although tea is of increasing importance. Depending on annual fluctuations, Burundi exports 28,000–32,000 metric tons (MT) of arabica coffee annually. Recovering from a poor harvest in the 1980–81 coffee year, Burundi produced a record 43,800 MT in 1981–82. Because of its quota under the International Coffee Agreement and lower world prices, however, only 32,000 MT were exported; revenues increased by only 7.5%. In 1984, Burundi exported 29,000 MT which earned $3 million. The long-term trend is favorable, as the government promotes a program of replacing older trees, providing insecticides and fertilizers, and improving the quality of coffee processing.

High-grade nickel deposits have been discovered in Burundi. The government, international organizations, and several private firms are now studying techniques for exploiting these deposits.

Tea production continues to increase, mostly as a result of assistance provided by the European Community (EC) development fund. Except for a poor harvest in 1980, tea production has increased steadily during the past 5 years and now ranks as Burundi's second most valuable export. In 1984, 3,073 MT of tea exported netted $7.3 million in foreign exchange.

Cotton production, which was declining for several years, has been revived. In 1984, Burundi produced 6,500 MT of raw cotton. About 400 tons were exported for a value of $684,000. The major part of the raw cotton is held in reserve for use in a textile factory built with Chinese assistance. In 1984, the plant produced 6.5 million square meters of cloth. This will add substantially to Burundi's limited manufacturing capacity, which currently centers on soft drinks, beer, cigarettes, and fibrocement roofing. Burundi's manufacturing sector is geared toward import substitution and the domestic market. In 1984, total manufacturing exports earned $4.5 million.

Seeking foreign investments, in 1979 Burundi enacted an investment code providing basic guarantees and in 1983 began negotiations with the United States for a bilateral investment treaty. The government holds a majority interest in about 50 mixed enterprises or "parastatals" with substantial foreign participation. Recently, the government began to implement reforms of the parastatal sector to increase efficiency and improve performance, in some cases divesting control altogether and moving them to the private sector. AMOCO has begun explorations for hydrocarbons in the northern part of Lake Tanganyika and the Ruzizi Plain. If sizable reserves are found, this could lead to substantial investment in Burundi.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Burundi seeks good relations with the bordering countries of Rwanda, Zaire, and Tanzania. It welcomes relations with all countries that respect the sovereign right of other nations, regardless of ideology. Burundi belongs to the Organization of African Unity, the African Development Bank, the Preferential Trade Agreement for Eastern and Southern African States, and other regional groupings. It has joined with Zaire and Rwanda in the Great Lakes States Economic Community (CEPGL) to spur regional development. It is also cooperating with Rwanda and Tanzania in joint economic development projects.

Burundi receives substantial amounts of development assistance, especially from the EC and Belgium. France, the Federal Republic of Germany, China, the United Nations, and the World Bank are also major donors. Several OPEC [Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries] nations also have provided assistance through loans or grants. The U.S.S.R., Romania, and North Korea have more limited programs.

DEFENSE

The Burundi Armed Forces are well-equipped and well-trained. The main purposes of the military are to maintain law and order and to deter foreign interference by Burundi's neighbors. Reflecting its nonaligned posture, Burundi receives military supplies, communications equipment, and training from France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, and Greece as well as from the Soviet Union, Libya, and North Korea. The United States also has a modest military assistance program with Burundi, which began in 1982 with an international military and education training (IMET) grant. In 1985, $141,000 of IMET funds is being spent to send five Burundi military officers to professional and technical training courses in the United States. U.S. Army and Air Force attaches resident in Kinshasa, Zaire, are also accredited to Burundi.

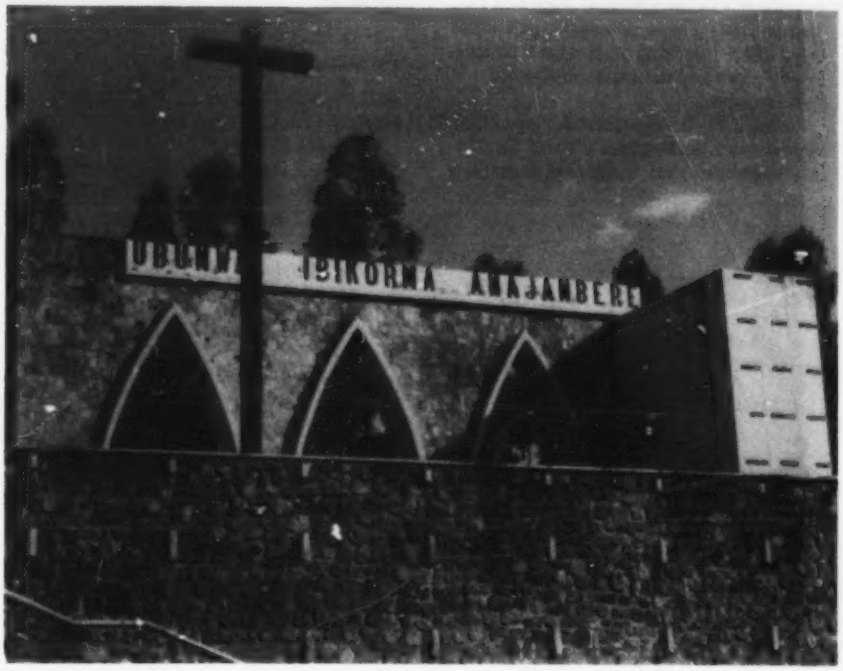
U.S.-BURUNDI RELATIONS

The U.S. Government endeavors to maintain friendly relations with Burundi's government and people and encourages efforts to create political stability and peaceful economic development.

A U.S. Consulate opened in Bujumbura in October 1960 and was elevated to embassy status in July 1962. Difficult periods in bilateral relations occurred in 1966, when the Ambassador was expelled without cause, and in 1972–73, during Burundi's internal strife.

After Burundi's ethnic conflict in 1972, the U.S. Government and U.S. relief groups contributed almost $1 million in disaster relief to Burundi. Under an ongoing program, Catholic Relief Services distributes PL-480 (Food for Peace) commodities through a series of maternal-health and nutrition clinics, food-for-work projects, and school lunch programs. In 1984, when Burundi was faced with critical food shortages due to drought, the U.S. Government moved quickly to send emergency food shipments.

The development strategy of the Agency for International Development (AID) program in Burundi, which began in 1978, focuses on helping the rural poor by promoting food availability, fuel production, and family health. One project is developing Burundi's abundant peat reserves as an alternative fuel to wood and charcoal. Another, devoted to the reforestation and preservation of the Bururi Forest, is making available new sources of firewood and construction timber. Additional activities include the improvement of a farm-to-market road, a seed multiplication project, and possibly small-farm systems research. In education, AID grants AFGRAD fellowships to several Burundi each year for training at the Master of Science level in such areas as agricultural economics, physiology, and economic



Prince Rwagasore Monument, overlooking the capital city (top) and pirogue on Lake Cohoha in the north (above).

planning. Also, the African Manpower Development Program provides nondegree training each year for 25–30 skilled technicians in the agricultural and rural development fields. In 1984, a total of $4.3 million was budgeted for development assistance, as well as $1.7 million for food assistance under the PL-480 program. The Peace Corps inaugurated a program in Burundi in March 1983. There are some 15 volunteers there working in projects to assist in education, agriculture, and rural development.

The U.S. Information Service (USIS) operates an American Cultural Center in Bujumbura that maintains a reading room and offers English-language courses throughout the year. The Fulbright Program has sponsored an exchange of American professors to teach in Burundi and scholarships for Burundi to study at U.S. universities. USIS also funds travel to the United States for a number of Burundi officials under the International Visitor Grant Program.

Principal U.S. Officials

Ambassador—James R. Bullington
Deputy Chief of Mission—
Dennis K. Hays
Director, AID Mission—George Bliss
Public Information Officer (USIS)—
David Lambert

The U.S. Embassy is at Avenue du Zaire (P.O. Box 1720), Bujumbura (tel. 23455). ■

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